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ABSTRACT

Portions of two previous studies which examined the effects of training in transactional analysis upon the interpersonal communication between supervisor and supervisee form the basis of this exploratory study. Major findings in the previous studies suggest that cognitive scripting, i.e., the behavioral patterns, thought patterns, and relationship, have a strong bearing on the outcome of the supervisory interaction. The impact of cognitive scripting is examined further in this study by the use of survey instruments and transcribed audio-taped case studies. Feedback from these sources indicates the following: Supervisees fail to appreciate the actual message because: (1) the supervisee does not hear the actual message but instead imposes his/her previously scripted patterns of response; (2) the supervisee anticipates being told how to do something and feels unsure unless this exchange occurs; (3) the supervisee does not expect to be treated as a professional and therefore does not accept professional communication as authentic. Participants in this study recommended that the supervisee as well as the supervisor be trained in transactional communication as a means of unmasking negative and unproductive verbal scripts. In cases where this training occurred, supervisor and supervisee engaged in productive transactions labeled problem-solving and self-reflective. (Author/JD)

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AN INVESTIGATORY STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF COGNITIVE SCRIPTING ON TEACHER-SUPERVISOR RELATIONSHIPS

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Abstract

Portions of two previous studies (Johnston, 1984; Johnston and Galluzzo, 1985) which examined the effects of training in transactional analysis upon the interpersonal communication between supervisor and supervisee form the basis of this exploratory study. Major findings in the previous studies suggest that cognitive scripting, i.e., the behavioral patterns, thought patterns, and relationship, have a strong bearing on the outcome of the supervisory interaction. The impact of cognitive scripting is examined further in this study by the use of survey instruments (Kahler & Capers, 1974; Abelson, 1976; and Kahler, 1980) and transcribed audio-taped case studies. Feedback from these sources indicates the following: Supervisees fail to appreciate the supervisor's message because 1) the supervisee does not hear the actual message but instead imposes his/her previously scripted patterns of response; 2) the supervisee anticipates being told how to do something and feels unsure unless this exchange occurs; 3) the supervisee does not expect to be treated as a professional and therefore does not accept professional communication as authentic. Participants in the study recommended that the supervisee as well as the supervisor be trained in transactional communication as a means of unmasking negative and unproductive verbal scripts. In cases where this training occurred, supervisor and supervisee engaged in productive transactions labelled problem-solving and self-reflective.

AN INVESTIGATORY STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF COGNITIVE SCRIPTING ON TEACHER-SUPERVISOR RELATIONSHIPS

A critical juncture in the professional development of teachers is how they perceive the purpose and process of supervision. While most teachers would endorse instructional supervision as a professional necessity, few would describe its value as personally beneficial. Blumberg's (1974) coined phrase, "the private cold war" appears to aptly describe the general tenor of relations between educational supervisors and supervisees. The descrepancy between theory and practice in supervision may lie in the standard conceptualization of supervision which is based upon a cause and effect model: good supervision yields cooperative supervisee response; bad supervision yields little or no cooperative response from the supervisee. An anecdotal reference most clearly focuses the issue. The following is taken from the investigatory study herewith being reported. In the first instance the supervisor is reporting his perception of the conferencing experience:

> The purpose of the supervisory activity was a post-observation conference. My goal was to discuss the lesson and its objectives. I expected that the supervisee would have a better understanding of the reading lesson I observed. I believe I achieved my supervisory goal. I was confident about both the written observation and the post-observation conference.

The second response is that of the supervisee. Both completed the response instruments simultaneously and without prior knowledge of the other's response.

> My expectations for the conference were that we would review my procedures and techniques and comment on my lesson. I believe my expectations were met, and I feel fine about the exchange. I didn't find the conference professionally useful. I don't feel I need supervision. I see the supervisor as a necessary tool, for instance, where teachers are inept or lax. Supervisors should be used to assist teachers in improving or more importantly weeding out poor teachers.

What may be concluded from this reference is that this teacher did not perceive the supervisory process as anything other than a policing or parental act. This is not a novel revelation. What is disconcerting is the fact that the previously cited exchange occurred with two individuals who were following a clinical-supervisory process. In other words, this exchange occurred after a process of supervision had taken place. The insight to be gained here is that even with the development of humanistic approaches to instructional supervision, progress has not been made in "warming up" the private cold war. It appears from this that while existing supervisory models used in training and field application provide practical approaches to implementing change, these models and the literature which conceptualizes supervision do not address why, in many cases, these process oriented techniques are not well received by the supervisee, and, in fact, why little change occurs in either the supervisee's teaching behavior or attitude toward the supervisory relationship. What remains unidentified is the element of the supervisory interaction which prevents the teacher from being open to the supervisor's communication and professional input.

Scripting and Supervision

Apparently the cause-effect model is too simplistic. It ignores intervening variables such as personality, training, and previous

experience which act upon the effective outcome of supervision. This is not a recent insight. Amidon and Blumberg (1965) in their initial study of the process of supervision suggested that the interactive nature of supervision be more closely examined beginning with how the teacher perceives the supervisor-teacher relationship. Yet twenty years later, a review of the literature reveals that a more complete explanation of the lack of receptivity to supervision continues to elude those concerned with instructional supervision (Abrell and Hanna, 1978).

One relatively unexplored element of supervisory interaction which addresses the issue of teacher perception of supervision is cognitive scripting. Cognitive script theory provides a plausible explanation for the effective or ineffective result of supervisory interaction. It explains, how, for example, a supervisory communication is superceded in the mind of the supervisee by previous supervisory experiences including verbal and behavioral patterns. It is these which have formed a supervisory script which acts as a filter preventing the supervisee from attending to, integrating, and responding authentically in the "here and now" to the on-going supervisory interaction (Bennett, 1978). What the theory of cognitive scripting suggests is that teachers' perceptions of a supervisory interaction are not based upon what supervisors hope that teachers see in a situation, but are based upon what the teachers bring to the interaction from previous experiences (Abrell and Hanna, 1978). The purpose of this presentation is to examine the effects of cognitive scripting on the professional development of teachers vis a vis instructional supervision. The question addressed is the potency of supervisory

scripts and how they effect the outcome of supervision in terms of teacher attitude toward supervision, collegial relations, and changed teaching behavior.

Abelson (1976) and Kahler (1977) have produced interesting theoretical frameworks of cognitive scripting, the first relating to thought and behavior, and the second relating to language patterns. According to Abelson, scripts are based upon previous experiences from which an individual abstracts critical features to use in making a current decision about a situation without rehashing the data. Kahler, whose script theory is an outgrowth of the psycho-social theory of transactional analysis, concurs with Abelson. Kahler further postulates that persons learn language scripts at a young age and then carry these language script cues into adulthood. He terms these word clues, "mini-scripts." (See Appendix A) He believes their use triggers more involved behavioral scripts. Often such repetitive, script motivated behavior becomes a pattern of irrational, unauthentic response to situations. Capers and Goodman (1983) describe this as "the same old nonproductive repetitive behavior" (p. 143). Kahler (1981) would suggest that the most fundamental scripts of supervision are formulated during childhood when individuals are supervised by parents. Consequently the most frequently identified scripts brought to an adult supervisory relationship are the messages established through parental contact. The most common scripted messages are: be perfect; try hard; hurry up; please me; and be strong. Since these goals are impossible to achieve, scripts based upon them are scripts of frustration, adaptation, and rebellion. Figure 1 is a synthesis of

conceptualizations of verbal scripting and the cognitive communication process.

Insert FIGURE 1 about here

The result of scripted behavior is that the individual does not perceive a situation as it is but only as he/she previously experienced a similar interaction. When applied to supervisory interaction, one recognizes the difficulty which exists if previous supervisory scripted behavior is not unmasked prior to establishing a supervisory relationship. This insight coupled with the findings that supervisory field based experiences for new teachers are a complicated set of both positive and negative experiences (Tanner & Elbers, 1985) suggests that teachers are probably heavily scripted prior to entering teaching. It is this scripting which needs to be unmasked by supervisors prior to establishing a supervisory relationship. The "unmasking" of scripts, as it is termed in transactional analysis, is a self-reflection process which, when completed, allows individuals to see situations more rationally, clearly, and objectively. It increases awareness of the ongoing experience and consequently the level of receptivity to the interaction (Berne, 1964; and Steiner, 1975). The first step to unmasking verbal scripting is an understanding of transactional communication (Berne, 1964). Previous studies suggest the viability of training supervisors in transactional communication (Johnston, 1984). With this training in hand, it would seem appropriate to move to another level of communication awareness, the

unmasking of verbal scripts as a part of establishing an authentic teacher-supervisor relationship.

Investigatory Study and Instrumentation

During the Spring of 1985, graduate students (n=32) enrolled in a course in supervision at Glassboro State College were assigned, as a part of their course requirements, to identify an individual within their school-work setting, who would be willing to be supervised over a 16 week period. Individuals who assented signed release forms allowing the supervisor to tape their conversations and pre and post observation conferences. In addition the supervisors and supervisees agreed to complete a questionnaire describing how each felt at the conclusion of the supervisory conference. Results were returned in separately sealed envelopes. Thirty-one of the thirty-two students completed all four required conferences. During the course of the semester, studentsupervisors did not train their supervisees in this method, but were encouraged to apply their growing awareness of verbal scripting to the conferencing setting. Each individual supervisory tape was reviewed and evaluated by the course instructor on the basis of the supervisor's use of transactional communication.

Three representative sets of tapes were transcribed for further study. Each set exhibited the effects of scripting upon the supervisee. In each case the scripting initially negatively effected the outcome of the supervisory interaction. In one case the supervisor who used adult communication to encourage a rational exchange was perceived as cold, unhelpful, and unwilling to "rescue" the supervisee who sought to avoid

problem-solving. In the second representative case, the supervisee responded positively to the supervisor's adult-rational verbal communication and moved from an adaptive communication level to an adult level by the fourth tape session. In the third instance, the supervisor actually addressed the issue of scripting and was able to initiate a self-reflecting attitude on the part of the supervisee whereby he saw his reactions to supervision as a response to previous experiences involving parental supervision he received as a child and the supervision which he had received as a new teacher. In all three instances the mini-scripts as conceptualized by Kahler (1980) were clearly identified in the tape transcripts. The primary verbalized drivers were the "Be perfect" and "Try hard." What could be safely concluded from this investigatory study is that the effect of scripting on supervisees' perceptions of supervisors can be isolated through a verbal script analysis and that these scripts color the individual supervisee's expectations of the level and content of the supervisory communication.

Feedback from the student-supervisors (graduate students) indicated that the evaluation, which each received on each taped session prior to taping a second session, was helpful in providing insights into how each might modify his/her transactional communication in order to invite more productive communication between the supervisee and themselves. Student-supervisor feedback also indicated that the supervisees found it difficult to appreciate the supervisor's adult-rational approach because 1) the supervisee heard a more parental, critical approach than was actually spoken; 2) the supervisee expected to be told what to do and felt this

was the only way to please the supervisor; 3) the supervisee saw supervision as a game and not as a means of developing an authentic professional working relationship. Student-supervisors recommended that supervisees receive training in transactional communication and verbal scripting as a means of providing them with the tools for unmasking their own scripts and identifying those factors which prevent them from participating in more productive teacher-supervisor communication.

Implications for Further Study

The implications of this presentation for administrative preparation are significant, particularly as they pertain to instructional supervision. If scripting is a potent element in the resistance to supervision, then it would seem expedient to incorporate techniques for using script awareness exercises in both teacher education undergraduate programs as well as supervisory graduate programs. The instruments used and tested in this study could be easily replicated and adapted for classroom use.

Script analysis and the unmasking of supervisory scripts appear to provide a key for unlocking the currently unaccounted for resistance to supervisory interaction. This study of the effects of cognitive scripting has revealed a potential challenge for change which addresses the issue of how teachers formulate their ideas about supervision and how that perception effects future supervisory relationships. What remains is for this insight to be further tested within the educational laboratory of undergraduate and graduate schools of teacher education.

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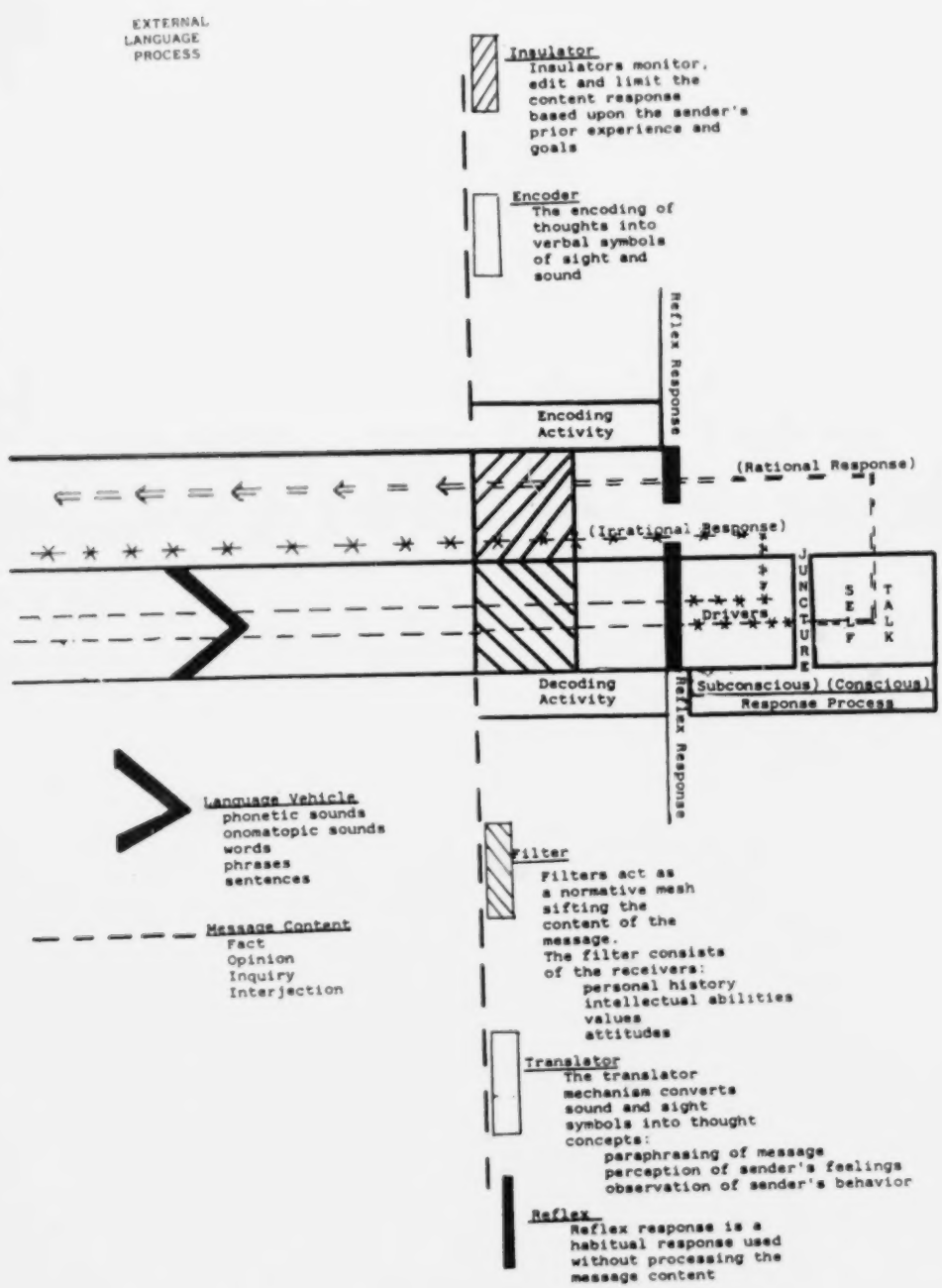
THE JOHNSTON MODEL OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL LANGUAGE PROCESSES



Drivers

Reliance on drivers involves:
- Word associations with previous behaviors or experiences(hooks)
- Short-circuiting the response process
- Irrationally triggered response

Juncture

Juncture is the point in the response process where the individual either remains in the irrational subconscious or moves into the rational conscious position

Self-Talk

Reliance on self-talk involves:
- a "camera check" of perceptions observed behavior actual message content
- a completely processed response
- a rational response

Figure 1

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Appendix A

DRIVER CUES

Drivers	Words	Speech Patterns
Be perfect	of course obviously clearly Big words	Over qualify; cover all bases; Tell more than asked; just right, careful phrasing People must understand me
Try hard	It's hard I can't I'll try Why don't you	Don't answer questions directly; Repeat questions; Insert parenthetical thoughts. Instead of giving direction
Please me	Can you Could you You know Kind of Sort of	Seeks approval; Don't you think? How am I doing?
Hurry up	Let's go Got to hustle	Rapidity of speech; Never enough time
Be strong	No comment I don't care	Never personalize; much use of its and "they"s.